

# Executive Summary

The Kentucky Watershed Management Framework is a dynamic, flexible structure for coordinating watershed management across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Watershed Management Framework is not a new program, but rather a way of coordinating existing programs and building new partnerships that will result in more effective and efficient management of the state's land and water resources. Inherent in the design of the Framework is the belief that many stakeholder groups and individuals must have ongoing opportunities to participate in the process of managing the abundant natural resources that characterize Kentucky's watersheds.

Benefits to the people of Kentucky include

- Better information for decision making
- Increased ability to resolve complex water resource problems
- Improved coordination among governmental agencies
- More opportunities for citizens to get involved
- Increased ability to demonstrate results and benefits of environmental management
- More cost-effective use of public and private funds

## Core Components of the Framework

The Framework consists of five core components.

***Basin management units*** provide the spatial basis for coordinating watershed ecosystem protection and restoration activities in Kentucky. The 12 basin management units are based on Kentucky's major river basins and tributaries that drain directly to the Ohio and River.

***A basin management cycle*** facilitates coordinated timing of key watershed management activities within each basin management unit. The cycle is composed of five phases: (1) scoping and data gathering, (2) assessment, (3) prioritization and targeting, (4) plan development, and (5) implementation. The five activity phases of the basin management cycle are sequenced and repeated in each basin management unit at fixed five-year intervals to ensure that watershed management goals, priorities, and strategies are routinely updated and implemented on an ongoing basis.

***A statewide basin management schedule*** establishes a statewide calendar and a sequence for conducting key management activities in each basin management unit and throughout the state. The statewide schedule facilitates efficient use of available human and financial resources by focusing major watershed management efforts on one portion of the state at any given time.

**Forums to support cooperative action** involve all interested parties to achieve better coordination, more cost-effective use of resources, and increased public support for watershed management efforts. A Partner Network, linking partner agencies and stakeholders via existing local organizations and forums, is a key element of the Framework approach to achieving broad public participation in watershed management. Coordination of activities will take place on three different levels: state, river basin, and watershed. Efforts taking place at each level will be linked together and integrated through communication forums including a Statewide Steering Committee, River Basin Teams, and Local Watershed Task Forces.

**Basin Management Plans and Watershed Action Plans** document management priorities and provide a common reference guide for implementation of the Watershed Management Framework at both the basin management unit and watershed levels.

## Forums for Communication and Public Participation

More than 30 organizations are working together to plan and implement the Kentucky Watershed Management Framework and to encourage other partners to join in the cooperative effort. Successful implementation of the Watershed Management Framework will require the support and efforts of citizens and organizations at many different levels. A **Partner Network** will be used to help coordinate and carry out watershed management activities. The Partner Network consists of agencies, organizations, and individuals who willingly invest their time and resources to learn about watershed management needs, develop and implement strategies to address those needs, and promote public involvement in the Watershed Management Framework.

Coordination of activities under the Watershed Management Framework will take place at three levels:

At the watershed level, **Local Watershed Task Forces** will rally public support and encourage stakeholders to become involved in the Watershed Management Framework process. Each Local Watershed Task Force formed in a watershed identified as a priority watershed will provide a forum for local government officials, industry representatives, and farming, environmental, and other stakeholder groups to develop and implement an Action Plan to address specific watershed problems. The Task Force will assist in determining which problems within a watershed can and should be addressed, in order to ensure the most cost-effective use of limited resources.

A **River Basin Team** will be formed to provide a forum for coordinating and carrying out watershed management activities in each of the state's 12 basin management units. The River Basin Team will facilitate communication among the Local Watershed Task Forces in a basin management unit. Working with the Task Forces, the River Basin Team will compile existing information and make plans for collecting data to fill information gaps. Using this information, the Team will evaluate watershed conditions and prioritize watershed management needs. A Basin Management Plan for

addressing the highest priority problems in the basin will then be drafted and shared with stakeholders and the public.

A ***Statewide Steering Committee*** will address issues of statewide coordination and policy related to the Watershed Management Framework. The Steering Committee will provide a forum for communication among the River Basin Teams and will coordinate watershed management activities taking place throughout the basin management cycle in all basin management units across the state.

Participation of partner agencies and organizations in any one of these forums will involve an ongoing commitment to identify and offer resources to support shared watershed management activities and costs. Each partner program involved in watershed management will also be responsible for orienting its day-to-day activities to support aspects of the basin management cycle. The Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) has agreed to take leadership responsibility for general coordination and oversight of the framework, providing administrative support to maintain the forums and strong lines of communication.

## **Resource Needs to Implement the Watershed Approach**

Many of the activities needed to successfully implement a watershed management approach are already being conducted, although the method and timing of operations may be revised under the new framework. Nonetheless, the Kentucky Watershed Framework Development Workgroup identified the need for ongoing coordination of these activities consistent with the basin management cycle. Basin Coordinator and Public Information Coordinator positions are recommended to fulfill this need.

Basin Coordinators will be assigned to one or more basin management units, and will be responsible for facilitating River Basin Team meetings and supporting the Statewide Steering Committee. Additionally, Basin Coordinators can serve as liaisons between Local Watershed Task Forces and the River Basin Teams. They will make sure that partners understand how the Kentucky Watershed Framework operates and are aware of key milestone dates so that the basin schedule of activities stays on track. Basin Coordinators will also compile information at key points along the basin management cycle, and bring together specific partners to troubleshoot issues or carry out planning and implementation functions.

Public Information Coordinators will be used to help communicate technical and policy information in a manner that promotes understanding among a broad range of audiences. They will work with River Basin Teams, Local Watershed Task Forces, Basin Coordinators, and the Partner Network to prepare messages regarding Basin Status Reports, public surveys, draft priority watershed rankings, and action plans. Information Coordinators will also be responsible for ensuring that information about ongoing activities and progress in basin management reaches key audiences.

Coordinator positions for activities in the Kentucky River Basin during fiscal year 1998 will be supported by the Kentucky River Authority and

DOW using existing appropriations. Expanding agency staffing caps or reallocating existing caps to allow new coordinator positions for the other basin groups in future years, either with new funds or under current funding levels, will be pursued by DOW. Other entities on the Statewide Steering Committee are encouraged to support any of the Basin Coordinator positions.

## **Purpose and Organization of This Document**

This document is designed to provide information and guidance to everyone involved in planning and implementing the Kentucky Watershed Management Framework. The following chapters present general and specific information about the Framework and plans for its implementation.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Kentucky Watershed Management Framework.

Chapter 2 presents detailed information about each of the five core components of the Framework: basin management units, basin management cycle, statewide basin management schedule, forums to support cooperative action and public participation, and management and action plans.

Chapter 3 explains specific activities to be conducted during implementation of the basin management cycle in each basin management unit, and the corresponding roles of River Basin Teams, Local Watershed Task Forces, Partner Network, Basin Coordinators, and Public Information Coordinators.

Chapter 4 outlines the organizational structure needed to fully implement the Kentucky Watershed Management Framework.

Chapter 5 describes the resources needed to ensure that basin management cycle tasks are accomplished and Framework goals achieved.